# What is God ?

What is God ? All that I propose to say on this subject is my own conviction; it is not unlikely that this may be wrong. I do not assert that the conclusion arrived at by others on the subject is wrong. But I have no doubt in my mind about the conviction I have formed; I have no doubts on the subject, though I have no right to pronounce the opinion of others as mistaken.

What is God ? Of this question the proper answer is that God alone knows that He is. Besides this, a man of realization, who has known the truth about God, may give some indication of what is approximate to the reality. As a matter of fact, the reality about God is known only to God Himself; those who have realized the truth may give some description of Him in the form of hints or suggestions: but he is actually far different from whatever is known and said about Him. The Vedas and other scriptures as well as the saints and sages have gone on describing Him from time immemorial, but their descriptions have not yet come to an end. If anyone attempts



Scanned with CamScanner

to describe that reality either by synthesizing those statements, or analysing them, a complete description will not be possible even by him. It will remain incomplete and unfinished. From these observations it is clear that God certainly exists; there is not the slightest doubt about His existence; this conclusion is quite unshakable. Therefore, when a person has taken to the practice of a discipline by forming a certain conviction about God in his mind, there is no need to alter the same, but some improvement in the conviction should, of course, be made. Truly speaking, none of those, who are engaged in the practice of a discipline, is in error; and from another point of view, all are in error. He who starts the practice of a discipline for the realization of God follows a path which leads to God; therefore he is not in error; and yet he is in error, because whatever conception he has formed in the mind about the object of attainment, or goal of the practice, the reality is far, far different from it. That which is known, conceived of, and for which a practice is undertaken, is nothing but a hint or gesture to point at the object, God. Therefore, so long at that object is not gained, all are said to be merged in error; but this should not lead one to the conclusion that, first of all, the error should be removed, and then a discipline undertaken. None can ever remove the error first; after true realization it gets automatically [removed]. Before that one has to proceed according to inference,

Scanned with CamScanner

and whatever is practised according to inference is the proper way of realization of the goal. For instance, one has seen the moon on the second day of the lunar fortnight, he now points to it through gesture to another person, who has not seen it, by saying, "May you look through my eyes, there is the moon above that tree, at a height of four finger's breadth from the tree." This statement leads the observer's gaze from the tree to the moon, and he succeeds in seeing moon. As a matter of fact, the observer neither sees entering the eyes of instructor, nor is the moon actually at a height of four finger's breadth from the tree, nor is the disc of the moon as small as it appears to him. But the eye being directed to the object, he succeeds in seeing it. In order to point out the moon of the second day of the lunar fortnight, some draw it with the help of a reed, and some to make it clear draw lines with lime, or make a pencil sketch of it; but, in reality, none of these has any actual affinity with the moon. They contain neither the brightness of the moon, nor are they as large as it is, nor possess its other virtues. Even so, God may be seen or realized when observed with the help of symbols. But the difference between the symbol and the reality of God is as great as the difference between the moon and the symbols used to indicate it. It may, indeed, be possible for a Yogi to acquaint us with the actual nature of the moon, but none can describe the reality



Scanned with CamScanner

about God, for it is not a thing which can be made subject to speech. It is known only when actually realized. He also who realizes it is not able to explain it. This is so far as the Reality is concerned.

Now, it is proposed to explain what should be the subject of meditation, of the practicant, and how it can be comprehended. What I heard on this subject from saints, or gathered from a study, and hearing of the scriptures, and what conviction has got firmly rooted in me through actual experience, will be placed before the reader. Whoever desires may put them into practice.

Meditation on the real Form of God, is not actually possible. So long as the eyes, mind and the intellect have no direct experience of God, whatever meditation is practised is based only on inference. But when this is done according to the instruction of saints or the scriptures, or taking a picture or image as model, it is possible for a practicant to realize God. It has already been pointed out that there is no need to introduce any change in the form of meditation one may have chosen for himself. But there is certainly some scope for improvement.

## How Meditation should be Practised

Some practicants meditate on the Unmanifest Pure Brahma, some on His manifested two-armed Form and some others on the Four-armed Form of Bhagavān Viṣṇu. As a matter of fact,



Scanned with CamScanner

just as Bhagavān Viṣṇu, Rāma and Kṛṣṇa are one and the same, even so the Goddess or the Female Form of the Supreme Deity, Śiva, Gaṇeśa and Sūrya ( the Sun-god ) are not different from Him. It appears that Śrī Vedavyāsa composed the eighteen Purāṇas in order to portray one God, according to the various conceptions of the people. The Purāṇa bearing the name of a particular Deity gives precedence to that Deity by declaring him to be the Supreme God—the Creator, possessed of all virtues. In reality, however, one and the same God has been described through all those different names and forms. The practicant may select the name and form according to his liking. If a person meditates on a pillar regarding it as God, it will be a meditation on God, provided his heart is fully fixed on the thought of God.

As between meditation on the Manifest and Unmanifest aspects of God, the latter is somewhat more difficult than the former. The result of both is the same; differences lie only in the procedure of practice. Practicants should, therefore, meditate on either the Unmanifest of Manifest aspect, according to their inclination or liking.

If worshippers of the Unmanifest aspect of God meditate on the Unmanifest without carrying in their mind the idea of the Manifest, there can be no objection; but if they carry on meditation on the Unmanifest, thoroughly realizing the truth about the Manifest, regarding Him as



Scanned with CamScanner

all-pervading and all-formed, their efforts will more quickly bear fruit. Success will be somewhat delayed if there is want of realization of the truth about the Manifest aspect of God.

Similarly, there is need for the worshipper* of the Manifest aspect to know the truth about Unmanifest, all-pervading Brahma. This will make his success easier and quicker. In the *Gītā*, the Lord has extolled the practice of meditation done with realization of His Glory.

मय्यावेश्य मनो ये मां नित्ययुक्ता उपासते ।
श्रद्धया परयोपेतास्ते मे युक्ततमा मताः ॥

( Gitā XII. 2 )

"I consider them to be the best Yogis who, endowed with supreme faith, and ever united through meditation with Me, worship Me with the mind centred on Me."

As a matter of fact, meditation done on the Manifest aspect, realizing the glory of the Unmanifest is the best and easiest discipline for the quick realization of God. The reality about God is, however, different from both those aspects, and cannot be meditated upon. There are several processes of meditation on the Unmanifest. The practicant should adopt for himself whatever process appears easy for him. The result of all is the same. Some of these processes are being described below.

* That is to say, those who constantly worship "Me" ( God ) on the lines laid down in the Gitā chapter XI verse 55.



Scanned with CamScanner

Following the directions given in the *Gītā* VI. II to 13, the practicant should spend at least three hours regularly every day in the practice of meditation in a solitary place, taking his seat either in the Swastika or Siddha posture, firing his gaze on the tip of the nose, or closing the eyes ( as it suits him ). If he cannot devote three hours to the practice, let him devote two hours; if he cannot devote two hours, let him devote at least one hour without fall. In the beginning, if his mind runs away from the practice, he may start with fifteen or twenty minutes, and gradually increase the time. Practice of meditation for three hours is indispensable for practicants who desire God-realization quickly. Practice of Japa of the Divine Name renders exceptional help during meditation. All Names of God are equally efficacious; but in the path of meditation on the Unmanifest aspect, precedence is given to Om. Maharṣi Patañjali says in his *Yoga-Darśana*:—

तस्य वाचकः प्रणवः । तज्जपस्तदर्थभावनम् ।

( I. 27-28 )

"Om is synonymous with Him. Japa of this should be performed, and its meaning ( God ) should be meditated upon."

These two aphorisms are based on the aphorism 'ईश्वरप्रणिधानाद्वा' ( *Yoga-Darśana* 1. 23 ), which inculcates surrender to God. The first aphorism quoted above declares the Name of God, and



Scanned with CamScanner

the second advises practice of Japa of the Name and meditation on the Divine Form.

I do not propose here to enter on a discussion on the other views of Maharṣi Patañjali on God. My intention is only to point out that, according to Patañjali, meditation on the Form should be carried on together with Japa of the Divine Name, in order to fix the mind on the object of meditation. If any practicant utters 'Ānandamaya' ( Embodiment of Bliss ), or 'Vijñānānandaghana' ( Solid Form of Knowledge and Bliss ) in the place of Om, there is nothing to object to Difference lie only in the Names; there is no difference in the result.

The best type of Japa is that which is performed by the mind. and which does not require the tongue to move, or the lips to utter any word. During the performance of this type of Japa, the processes of meditation and Japa may proceed together. Of the four aspects of the Antaḥkaraṇa ( internal organ of perception and cognition ), the mind and intellect are the chief. Determining, first, through the intellect, the Form of God, let the intellect be steadied on it, and then let the mind repeat, again and again, the name of 'Ānandamaya' the all-pervading embodiment of Bliss. This is Japa and meditation, both combined. As a matter of fact, there is no special difference between the Japa of 'Ānandamaya' and meditation on the same. Both Japa and meditation may be carried on simultaneously. The second process



Scanned with CamScanner

is practice of Japa with the breath, in this process, Japa of the Name is performed through the throat in rhythm with the ingoing and outgoing breath. In other words, the Name is repeated with the breath, stopping the tongue and lips altogether. This is Japa through the Prāṇa, or vital air: it is also called worship through the vital air. This form of Japa also is of a superior type. If this practice does not become possible, let the mind be devoted to meditation, and the tongue to utterance of the Name; but in my opinion practice of Japa through the breath will be both easier and more profitable to the practicant. This is so far as Japa is concerned; strictly speaking, Japa should be practised during both the types of meditation, viz., meditation on the Unmanifest as well as on the Manifest. Now we shall deal with meditation on the Unmanifest aspect of God.

Retiring to a solitary place, and steadying himself in his seat, let the practicant practise as follows with a concentrated mind. Regarding all things appearing to his senses and mind as illusory, let him go on renouncing the same. whatever appears to him, let him regard the same as non-existence. Let him feel that the gross physical body, the senses of perception, mind and the intellect, all are non-existence: thus negating everything, finally the faculty of negation of the negativing subject, that is, the faculty which negative objects will also become silent and still. ( That faculty of negation is also called Knowledge, discrimination and cognition



Scanned with CamScanner

or Pratyaya; these are all functions of the pure Intellect. The Intellect, which meditates on God, and negatives all other objects, by saying, 'Not this, Not this,' is its substratum and is described in the Vedas as, 'Not this, Not this.' ) That faculty does not require to be renounced, it becomes quite automatically. For in the act of renunciation, the three dimensional experience between the subject, object and act of renunciation is bound to appear. That is why active renunciation is not possible in that state, and it takes place automatically. Just as want of fuel will make the fire still, even so in the absence of objects, the faculties of cognition will get wholly still. Then, whatever remains as residue is God in His reality. This is called seedless Samādhi.

तस्यापि निरोधे सर्वनिरोधान्निर्बीजः समाधिः ।

( *Yoga*. 1. 5 )

Here, the question arises that after renunciation, the subject, or the renouncer, remains. He is small, and God is great. How can that residue be described as God? The question is, no doubt, relevant; but the residue is small, so long as regarding itself as confined to a limited space, it regards the whole space external to it as full of others. When all other objects are fully negatived that remains as the final residue is nothing but God and God alone. When the objective world is pulled up by the roots and thrown away ( from consciousness ), automatically God alone remains. When the limitations are destroyed, all differences and divisions cease to exist, and one, infinite God is left as remainder,



Scanned with CamScanner

who fills up everywhere, and pervades all time and space. In reality, time and space also are fancied in Him. He is the one substance, standing by Himself, indescribable and inconceivable. When all thoughts are wholly renounced, it is then that the hidden store of inconceivable Brahma reveals itself, and the practicant gets mingled with it. So long as under the shelter of Ignorance, other objects remained, that store remained hidden from view. With the cessation or Ignorance, one substance alone is left behind; under the circumstance, absorption in that substance, in other words, the existence of one object, after all thoughts are stilled, is incontrovertible.

The sky within the pot is separated from the broad, external sky, so long as the pot is not broken. The breaking of the pot is synonymous with the destruction of Ignorance; but this example also does not wholly cover the point. For when the pot is broken to pieces, its broken parts cover some portion of the sky. But when Ignorance is destroyed, nothing is left to screen even the least part of Knowledge. When the removal of error, the world wholly ceases to be. Then what is left as remainder is Brahma. The sky within the pot, in this example, is the Jiva, or individual soul, and the wide, external sky is God. When lhe limitation in the form of the pot is broken, the two become one. They were one even before, but appeared as different owing to the barriers created by the limitations.

Really speaking, the example of the sky is



Scanned with CamScanner

not entirely applicable in the case of God. The sky is inert: God is not inert. The sky is an object of sight: God is no such object. The sky is subject to change: God is changeless. The sky is not everlasting: it is destroyed during final Dissolution ( Mahāpralaya ): God is everlasting, eternal. The sky is void, it contains every other thing: God is compact and solid, other things can have no place in Him. Thus, God is wholly different from the sky. In a part of Brahma lies Māyā, who is called unmanifest Prakṛti; in a part of Māyā lies Mahat-Tattva ( Universal Intellect ) from which is derived the intellect of others. In a part of that intellect is the Ego, in a part of the Ego is the sky ( ether ), in a part of the sky ( ether ) is air, in air is fire, in fire water and in water the earth. From this process of creation it is proved that the whole universe lies in a part of Māyā, and Māyā lies in a part of God. According to this reasoning, on comparison with God, the sky is extremely small; but this knowledge of its insignificance is gained only after the realization of God. For instance, a person is going through the experience of a dream. In that state of dream, he sees the quarters, time, sky, air, fire, sun, moon, day, night and all other things; they appear very extensive; but immediately his eyes are open, the whole of that creation vanishes. Thereafter, he realizes that that creation of his thought was within him. What was within him was certainly smaller than him, and he is greater than that creation of



Scanned with CamScanner

thought. As a matter of fact, it had no real existence, it was nothing but a thought; but if it had existence, it was extremely small and lay in a part of him. And because it was his thought, it was not separate from him. This knowledge dawns when the eyes are opened, that is, after awakening. Even so, when the soul gets awakened in the reality of God, the creation ceases to exist.

If it is regarded to exist anywhere, then according to the statements of saints, it exists in a mere fractional part of God, only in His thought.

That is why the example of the sky cannot be fully applied in the case of God. It is true only to the extent, that just as the sky appears formless to the eye of man, even so Brahma is really formless or Unmanifest. Just as the sky, appears Infinite to the eye of man, even so Brahma is True and infinite. The example of the sky is cited in order to make these ideas conform to the human intellect. When all those things are negative, what is left as the remainder; none can describe its character; it is an exceptional, extraordinary thing. Saints possessed of subtle vision, who have realized the subtle nature of things call it as 'सत्यं ज्ञानमनन्तं ब्रह्म—Brahma, who is Truth, Consciousness and Infinity.' He is boundless, unlimited, Self-conscious, the Knower, compact embodiment of Bliss, Happiness itself, true and eternal. These are the attributes to indicate that extraordinary thing. When He is realized, man gets over the risk of any fall. Misery, pain, evil, grief, limitation, distraction, ignorance and sin—all these modifications cease intirely for all time.



Scanned with CamScanner

There is full dawning of one Brahma, who is Truth, Knowledge, Consciousness and Bliss. The word 'dawning' is used only to convey a faint impression. What actually happens cannot be, as a matter of fact, expressed in words.

अनादिमत्परं ब्रह्म न सत्तन्नासदुच्यते ।

( Gitā, XIII. 12 )

"The beginningless supreme Brahma is said to be neither Sat ( being ) nor Asat ( non-being )."

If we describe Him as the Enjoyer of Knowledge, then there is no object of enjoyment. If we call Him Knowledge and Happiness itself, then there is no Enjoyer. Enjoyer, enjoyment and the object of enjoyment all are reduced to one. In Him, all triangular experiences ( Tripuṭī ) cease. This is one method of meditation on the Unmanifest.

## The Second Process

Seated in a solitary place, and closing his eyes, let the practicant reflect that a flood has come in the ocean of Sat, Chit and Ānanda ( Truth, Knowledge and Bliss ), and that he is sinking deep in that flood; that he is merged in the ocean of infinite Knowledge and Bliss. The whole universe existed in the thought of God. He has renounced the thought, therefore the world being annihilated, everywhere one God, the embodiment of Truth, Knowledge and Bliss, remains. Being engaged in the meditation on God, he ( the practicant ) is in the thought of God, except him every other object has been negatived. When God will give up the thought



Scanned with CamScanner

There is full dawning of one Brahma, who is Truth, Knowledge, Consciousness and Bliss. The word 'dawning' is used only to convey a faint impression. What actually happens cannot be, as a matter of fact, expressed in words.

अनादिमत्परं ब्रह्म न सत्तन्नासदुच्यते ।

( Gītā, XIII. 12 )

"The beginningless supreme Brahma is said to be neither Sat ( being ) nor Asat ( non-being )."

If we describe Him as the Enjoyer of Knowledge, then there is no object of enjoyment. If we call Him Knowledge and Happiness itself, then there is no Enjoyer. Enjoyer, enjoyment and the object of enjoyment all are reduced to one. In Him, all triangular experiences ( Tripuṭī ) cease. This is one method of meditation on the Unmanifest.

## The Second Process

Seated in a solitary place, and closing his eyes, let the practicant reflect that a flood has come in the ocean of Sat, Chit and Ānanda ( Truth, Knowledge and Bliss ), and that he is sinking deep in that flood; that he is merged in the ocean of infinite Knowledge and Bliss. The whole universe existed in the thought of God. He has renounced the thought, therefore the world being annihilated, everywhere one God, the embodiment of Truth, Knowledge and Bliss, remains. Being engaged in the meditation on God, he ( the practicant ) is in the thought of God, except him every other object has been negatived. When God will give up the thought



Scanned with CamScanner

of the practicant, he also will cease to exist, and God alone will remain. If instead of giving up his thought, God keeps him in mind, even then it is a matter of gratification and delight. Let the practicant thus worship the Unmanifest, maintaining his separate individuality.

In this process, separateness remains during the period of practice, and at the stage of realization identity with God is established. God gives up His thought, therefore He alone remains. This is one process. Besides this, there are other processes of meditation on the Unmanifest, two of which have been described in the article on "Means of Realization of True Happiness" to which the reader is referred. In short, there are two methods of meditation on the Unmanifest, viz, through the conception of separateness and identity. The fruit of both the methods is God-Realization in identity. Those who regarding the Jiva ( individual soul ) as finite, do not conceive it as ever identical with God, attain liberation of a limited type. They do not attain eternal liberation. After Universal Dissolution, they have to return. According to this theory of Liberation, they remain separate even after the attainment of Brahma.

Now, the subject of meditation on the Manifest will be dealt with. The fruit of worship of the Manifest may be of both the types. If the practicant seeks immediate Liberation, or complete union with pure Brahma, he may attain such union, or immediate Liberation. But if he



Scanned with CamScanner

wants that becoming a servant, associate or friend, he should enjoy Divine Love by living near God, or maintaining his separate individuality serve God by preaching in the world the message of Divine Love, in that case he may attain, according to his desire, any of the types of liberation known as Sālokya ( residence with God ), Sārūpya ( attainment of God's Form ), Sāmīpya ( nearness to God ), Sāyujya ( Identity with God ), etc., and after death pass on to the eternal, supreme abode of God. Living in that eternal region till final Dissolution, he ultimately gets united with God, or may also take birth as a Kāraka Puruṣa for the redemption of the world, but birth does not cause him any entanglement. Māyā can inflict no misery or suffering on him, and he remains eternally liberated. The Eternal Abode, where such a practicant goes, is above all regions, and is the best of regions. Beyond it, there is nothing else but Unmanifest Pure Brahma, the embodiment of Existence, Knowledge and Bliss. It eternally exists; in other words, when other regions are destroyed, it remains. What is the character of that region ? This is known to him alone who reaches that region, when all the different imaginary conceptions about it are transformed into the real truth. Mahātmās say that devotees who reach that region attain almost all the powers and Siddhis possessed by God, but they never make use of them as against the process of God's creation. He who becoming the servant, friend or associate of the glorious Lord constantly lives near Him in His Supreme abode, always acts following His behests. Verse 24 of Discourse VII of the *Gītā* speaks



Scanned with CamScanner

referring to practicants who go to this Supreme Abode. The *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* and *Chhāndogya* Upaniṣads contain detailed descriptions of this luminous path; it is this eternal Abode which is perhaps called as Goloka by the worshippers of Bhagavān Śri Kṛṣṇa, and as Sāketaloka by the worshippers of the Bhagavān Śrī Rāma. The Vedas describe it as Satyaloka or Brahmaloka. ( It is not the Brahmaloka in which Brahmā resides, and which has been described in the first half of verse 16 of Chapter VIII of the *Gītā*. ) In His Manifest Form, God resides in the Eternal Abode. Lack of faith in the Eternal Abode, with faith in the Manifest aspect of God, is, indeed, a great error.

## How God assumes the Manifest Form for the sake of Devotees

God, the embodiment of Existence, Knowledge and Bliss, in His eternal, boundless aspect pervades everywhere. Fire may be mentioned as an analogous example. In its unmanifest state, Fire is present everywhere, and becomes manifest when effort is made towards it, with the help of materials which can bring it into manifestation. When manifested, the form of the Fire appears equal in length and breadth to the wood through which it is manifested. Even so, according to the wish of the devotee, all-pervading, invisible, subtle and Formless God reveals Himself by assuming a form. In reality, the example of the pervasiveness of Fire also is imperfect; for where there is only ether



Scanned with CamScanner

and air, Fire does not exist, but God is present everywhere completely. Therefore, the pervasiveness of God is superior to all, and most extraordinary. There is no place where God is not. And in the whole of creation, there is no such spot where God's Māyā is not present. God can, therefore, reveal Himself anywhere He likes, through this material in the form of Māya. Where there is water as well as cold, ice may be formed. Where there is earth and the potter, a pot may be formed. Water and earth may, perhaps, be unobtainable at places; but God and His Māyā are present everywhere throughout creation. Under the circumstances, where lies the difficulty in His manifesting Himself ? What is wanted is only the devotee's Love.

> "Hari ( God ) pervades everywhere equally;
> Through Love, He is manifested; this I have known."*

All people can reason about the pervasiveness of the Unmanifest, but in His Manifest Form, God can be seen only by the devotee. God is all-powerful, and can do whatever He pleases. To one, to many, or to all people at once, He can vouchsafe His vision; this depends on His will. True, like the play of a child, that will of His is not tainted with defect. His will is ever perfect. The wish of the devotee also follows the will of God. The Lord said that He resides in the heart of the devotee. This is

* हरि ब्यापक सर्वत्र समाना। प्रेम तें प्रगट होहिं मैं जाना॥



Scanned with CamScanner

true. Just as fire in its unmanifest state is present in our bodies, even so God in His Unmanifest form of Sat, Chit and Ānanda is present in every heart; but the heart of the devotee being pure, He can be directly seen there. Such is the speciality of the devotee's heart. The reflection of the sun falls equally on wood, stone and a mirror, but it is seen in the mirror, and not in the wood or stone. Even so, God, though present in every heart cannot be seen in the wood-like impure heart of the man without devotion, and can be directly observed in the mirror-like pure heart of the devotee. What may be the devotee's conception during meditation, in that Form does He lodge Himself in the devotee's heart.

The Mahātmās say that where Kīrtana is performed, God Himself remains present there in His manifest form. The devotee also engaged in Kīrtana can see Him in that manifest form. This should not be regarded as a mere projection of the mind of the devotee. He sees the Lord truly, and as a matter of fact. What is seen only as an appearance is an act of Māyā. God is, however, the Lord of Māyā. The belief of the saints is true that:—

मद्भक्ता यत्र गायन्ति तत्र तिष्ठामि नारद ॥*

( Ādipurāṇa 19. 35 )

It is possible that though present in Kīrtana in His Manifest Form, God is not actually seen by a person; nevertheless it is conducive to spiritual good to cultivate the faith that He is Himself present there.

*"O Nārada, I am present where My devotees sing and chant."



Scanned with CamScanner

God can manifest Himself when He likes, wherever He likes, and in whatever Form He likes, according to the wish of the devotee, therefore whatever Form on which the devotee may meditate, the result is the same. He may meditate, either on Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the embodiment of blue-coloured Beauty, adorned with a crown containing the peacock's feather, or on Bhagavān Śrī Rāma, armed with the bow and arrow, the Best Person who established propriety of conduct. He may meditate either on Bhagavān Śrī Viṣṇu, holding the conch, the circular weapon Chakra, the club and the lotus, or on the Universal Form of God. It is all the same. Whatever Form one meditates upon should be regarded as the fullest manifestation of God. Similarly, Japa also may be performed, according to one's taste and liking, of Om, Rama, Kṛṣṇa, Hari, Nārāyaṇa, Śiva, or any other Divine Name; the result of all is the same. Some processes of meditation on God's Form with attributes have been described in the article on "Lessons in Devotion and Divine Love" and "True Happiness—the Means of its Realization."* The attention of the readers is drawn to them.

Now, it is proposed to say something about the Universal Form of God. The Form which the Lord revealed before Arjuna was no doubt His Universal Form, and this Universe itself described in the Vedas as Bhūḥ, Bhuvaḥ,

* The original of these two articles in Hindi have been reprinted as booklets and may be had from the Gita Press.



Scanned with CamScanner

Swaḥ, ( the earth, the intermediate region and heaven ) is also the Lord's Universal Form. Both are the same. The entire Universe itself is God's Form. In everything movable, and immovable, God is present. To respect and serve the Universe regarding it as God's Form, means offering of respect and service to God Himself in His Universal Form. The imperfections and modifications of the Universe are not present in God. These are mere sports like the play of the magician. The name and form—all are sports. God ever exists in His own state of being. Like water in the ice, He in His unmanifest state is present everywhere. The water itself is seen as the solid mass of ice; in reality it is nothing. Even so, the Universe is seen in pure Brahma; as a matter of fact, it does not exist.

In his Saguṇa aspect, like the Fire even though unmanifest, He is all-pervading; He can manifest Himself whenever He likes. This is what has been stated above. This all-pervading God is called Viṣṇu. The word Viṣṇu itself means all-pervading.

## God is above the Guṇas, is endowed with all Guṇas, good and bad, and is possessed of only virtuous Guṇas

No Guṇa exists in God. He is above the Guṇas; all Guṇas, good and bad, exist in Him; again, He is possessed only of virtues, there is no trace of vice in Him—all these three statements may be made with reference to God. This subject should be properly understood.



Scanned with CamScanner

The reality about pure Brahma, Unmanifest, Conscious, embodiment of Knowledge and Bliss, and all-pervading God, is wholly beyond all the Guṇas. All virtues and vices in the world originate from Rajas and Tamas. Sattva, Rajas and Tamas—these three Guṇas are included in Maya, that is why the latter is called Máyá, consisting of the three Guṇas. Among them Sattva is best, Rajas is intermediate, and Tamas is lowest, God is altogether different from this Máyá, wholly beyond and free from the Guṇas; that is why He is called Pure. Therefore, He is above the Guṇas.

Máyá does not exist in reality; when her existence is conceived of, it is only an imagination. She is fancied to exists in part of God. Virtues and vices all exist in Máyá. According to this reasoning, the entire world consisting of virtues like truth, compassion, renunciation, discrimination, etc., and vices like lust, anger, greed, infatuation, etc., is superimposed on God. That is why all virtues and vices may be regarded as established in Him. Under the circumstance, He may be described as endowed with all Guṇas, good and bad.

God, the Creator, or Brahma qualified by Maya, in whom this Universe is included, is not different from Pure Brahma; He manifests Himself subordinating Maya, and incarnates Himself on earth from time to time. That is why He is called "qualified by Maya." In the *Gītā* it is stated:—



Scanned with CamScanner

अजोऽपि सन्नव्ययात्मा भूतानामीश्वरोऽपि सन् ।
प्रकृतिं स्वामधिष्ठाय सम्भवाम्यात्ममायया ॥

( IV. 6 )

"Though unborn and immortal, and also the Lord of all beings, I manifest Myself through My own Yogamāyā ( divine potency ), keeping My nature ( Prakṛti ) under control."

Just as God incarnates Himself on earth, even so He manifests Himself in the beginning of creation, subordinating Māyā to Himself. That manifestation is called Viṣṇu. That Primeval Being, Viṣṇu, is possessed of all Sattvic qualities. He is the very embodiment of Sattva. He is adorned with Sattvic energy, glory, power, majesty etc. The divine qualities are the same as Sattvaguṇa. Pure Sattva is His Form. Vices exist in Rajas and Tamas. Love develops between those who resemble one another in nature and are equals. That is why devotees, who possess the divine virtues, are said to be the proper persons to gain the vision of God. The Saguṇa aspect of God, qualified by Māyā, comes down on earth, from time to time, together with Māyā. He is possessed of all virtues; He is pure and free, the Lord of all and all-powerful. There is nothing which He cannot perform. That is why, though in reality Rajas and Tamas do not exist in that embodiment of pure Sattva, the Saguṇa, Manifest Form of God, nevertheless He can perform acts which are expression of Rajas and Tamas. Bhagavān Viṣṇu is observed to perform acts of



Scanned with CamScanner

violence in the course of chastisement of the wicked. From the human standpoint, this may appear as violence but as a matter of fact violence has no place in Him. Being the dispenser of justice, He has to act according to the circumstance. King Janaka was a liberated soul, and was exceptionally Sattvic in nature; but being a ruler, administration of justice was his function. He had even to inflict punishment on thieves. There is nothing objectionable in this. The mother in order to train up her dear child threatens it, and now and then, when she finds it necessary, gives a slap or two, with a heart full of thoughts of the child's welfare; but the act is an expression of her compassion for the child. Even so the chastisement inflicted by God, the ocean of mercy, the dispenser of Justice, is also full of compassion. The Kāma, or desire, sanctioned by Dharma is also God. The Lord said:—

धर्माविरुद्धो भूतेषु कामोऽस्मि भरतर्षभ ।

The desire consistent with Dharma is he, not a sinful desire. God is Sat ( good ); He is Sattvic. He is Pure Sattva. He is endowed with the pure, Sattvic Vidyā ( Knowledge ) of Māyā. The Jīva is endowed with Avidyā or Ignorance. In Vidyā, there is Knowledge and Light. How can vice and darkness find any lodgment there? Vice lies with Avidyā or Ignorance. According to this reasoning, God is endowed with pure, unadulterated virtue.

The above discussion proves that God may be described as beyond the Guṇas, as endowed with



Scanned with CamScanner

both virtue and vice, and also as endowed with pure, unadulterated Sattvaguṇa.

## The Reality about God or Union of the Unmanifest and Manifest Forms

There are three states of the body—the gross, subtle and causal. The body which is seen through the eyes is the gross body, that which goes to the other world after death is the subtle body, and that which gets absorbed in Māyā is the causal body. These three divisions of the body can be seen even every day. In the waking state, the gross body functions. In the dream state, the subtle body and in deep sleep, the causal body remains. Similarly, God also may be described to possess three states. That which remains during Final Dissolution is the causal body of God; the whole universe gets dissolved into it and remains there. At that time God and His Prakṛti alone remains; all Jīvas get absorbed into Prakṛti. In the Jīvas also, there are parts of both Prakṛti and Puruṣa, Consciousness is the part of God, and Ignorance is a part of Prakṛti. Owing to identification with Māyā, Jīvas do not get liberated even during Final Dissolution. After that, in the beginning of a new creation, they wake up according to their respective Karmas, like men waking up from sleep. In this way, the forms of God during Final Dissolution may be described as His causal form.

The subtle form of God is present everywhere; He is called the First or Primal Person. He is the original



Scanned with CamScanner

cause of Creation. His name is *Puruṣottama*, the Best Person, and God, the Creator.

In His visible form, God eternally exists in His Supreme Abode as Bhagavān Viṣṇu, the holder of the conch, the circular weapon Chakra, the club and the lotus.

According to the very conception of the devotee, God assumes His Form. The whole of this universe is God's Body, and our bodies are included in that Body. According to this argument, we all exist in Him.

There is another truth, which should be properly understood. When the sky is clear and the sun is up, nothing is observed in the sky between the sun and us, nevertheless water exists there. It will have to be granted that between the sun and us, the region is full of water, but that water cannot be seen, because it exists in its subtle or atomic state. When it becomes thicker, it begins to manifest itself, Vapour is produced by the heat of the sun; when that vapour becomes thicker it is transformed into cloud, and the cloud is transformed into water. When the cloud passes a high hill, the visitor to the hill will get his clothes wetted, even though there may be no rain. When the particles of water become thicker in the cloud, drops are formed, and when they are thicker still, hail-stones are formed and rained down on earth. A hail-stone or ice, when reached upon by heat gets dissolved into water, and a stronger heat reduces it to vapour, which rising to the sky becomes invisible. Thus, finally, water is reduced to its atomic, unmanifest state. These very



Scanned with CamScanner

subtle atoms of water cannot be seen even with the help of a powerful lens that magnifies objects a thousand times. But water certainly exists in that state; if it did not, wherefrom does it come ?

The reality about God should be understood with the help of this example. It is said in the *Gītā*—

अक्षरं ब्रह्म परमं स्वभावोऽध्यात्ममुच्यते ।
भूतभावोद्भवकरो विसर्गः कर्मसंज्ञितः ॥
अधिभूतं क्षरो भावः पुरुषश्चाधिदैवतम् ।
अधियज्ञोऽहमेवात्र देहे देहभृतां वर ॥

( VIII. 3-4 )

Of the seven questions of Arjuna, the sixth was this: What is Brahma ? What is Adhyātma ? What is Karma ? What is Adhibhūta ? What is Adhidaiva ? And what is Adhiyajña ? In the above verses, the Lord has given His reply to the questions. He says the supreme Indestructible is Brahma, one's own self ( the Jīvātmā ) is Adhyātma, the discharge of spirits ( Visarga ) which brings forth the existence of beings is Karma, all perishable objects are Adhibhūta. Hiraṇyagarbha or the Second Puruṣa ( Brahmā ) as Universal Life is the Adhidaiva, and the unmanifest, all-pervading Viṣṇu is Adhiyajña.

This may be understood as follows with the help of the above example.

( 1 ) In the place of the atomic state of water—

God as pure Existence, Knowledge and Bliss, beyond the Guṇas, in whom this universe was neither ever created, nor exists; who is absolute, transcendent, supreme, indestructible.



Scanned with CamScanner

( 2 ) Water in the form of vapour—

That very pure Brahma in the form of Adhiyajña, unmanifest, all-pervading God, possessed of Māyā.

( 3 ) Cloud—

This is Adhidaiva, the life of every being, Hiraṇyagarbha or Brahmā. The collection of thirteen Tattvas is called subtle; among these Tattvas Prāṇa or vital air is the chief. The Prāṇas of all beings combined make the Universal Prāṇa; this Universal Prāṇa remains during Pralaya, or partial destruction, but nor during final disso'ution. The aggregate of the seventeen Tattvas makes the subtle body of Hiraṇyagarbha ( Brahmā ).

( 4 ) The drops of water in lakhs and crores—

The Jīvas of the world.

( 5 ) Rain—

The action of the Jīvas.

( 6 ) Hail or Ice—

The grossest form of the five elements.

The state of this creation is so very gross and transient that the slightest heat will immediately dissolve it, like hail dissolved into water. Heat, in this example, is that luminous flame of wisdom, which when produced dissolves the gross creation in the form of hail.

Ignorance is the same as cold. Whatever the amount of Ignorance, such is grossness; whatever the amount of Knowledge, such is subtlety. The greater the weight of a thing, the lower it falls; the lighter it is, the higher it rises. Ignorance is weight; when water is extremely



Scanned with CamScanner

gross and becomes ice, it has go down; even so the Jiva becoming gross through the weight of Ignorance has to go down.

As soon as the heat of Knowledge is obtained, the weight of the world goes down one's back. Just as when greater heat is applied to water, it becomes vapour and goes up, even so the Jīva goes up.

The Jīvātmā ( individual soul ) is identical with God Himself; but when it becomes gross through inertia and Ignorance, it suffers a fall. Ignorance is the cause of descent, and Knowledge is the cause of ascent. When it once rises to the last limit of ascent, the Jīvātmā does not, again, suffer a fall. In its conception, everything becomes God Himself; and, in reality, all is but one. Atom, vapour, cloud, drop of rain and hail—all this is nothing but water.

According to this argument, all objects are in reality God; that is why God manifests Himself in whatever manner He likes, whenever He likes, whatever and in whatever form He likes. When this Knowledge is gained, the practicant sees God alone everywhere. Water is seen everywhere, when the truth about water is known; in the atom it is water, in the hail it is so. In the subtle state it is water, as well as in the grossest. Even so, one God alone exists in all subtle and gross objects.

'अणोरणीयान् महतो महीयान् ।'

This is union between the Unmanifest and the Manifest.

Self-love grows through ignorance; the more there is self-love, the more will one take to objects of the world. The more there is the weight of worldly posses-



Scanned with CamScanner

sions, the more will one go down. There are three Guṇas, among them, Tamoguṇa is the heaviest; that is why the person possessed of Tamoguṇa falls low. Rajoguṇa is of medium weight, that is why the being possessed of Rajoguṇa remains among men, in the middle. Sattvaguṇa is light and the person possessed of Sattvaguṇa goes up towards God.

'ऊर्ध्वं गच्छन्ति सत्त्वस्थाः'
'मध्ये तिष्ठन्ति राजसाः'
'अधो गच्छन्ति तामसाः'

Light things float on the surface, heavy things get submerged. The demoniac qualities are the marks of Tamoguṇa, that is why they take one down. Sattvaguṇa, being light, takes one up. The divine qualities are the marks of Sattvaguṇa, they are the possessions of God. The more these possessions increase, the more the practicant goes up nearer to God.

In this way, one and the same God should be regarded as pervading all gross and subtle objects.

In His all-pervading aspect, God sees all and knows all.

सर्वतःपाणिपादं तत्सर्वतोऽक्षिशिरोमुखम् ।
सर्वतःश्रुतिमल्लोके सर्वमावृत्य तिष्ठति ॥

( Gītā, XIII. 13 )

What is the character of that object of knowledge? He is possessed of hands and feet on all sides, eyes on all sides, head, face and ears on all sides. There is no place where He is not, no sound which He does not hear, no sight which He does not see, no object which He does not take, and no region where He has no access.



Scanned with CamScanner

We offer Him eatable and He immediately eats them. We offer Him praises, and He hears them. He sees everyone of our acts, but we cannot see Him. With reference to this the question arises, how do all the senses of the same Person remain everywhere ? Ho w does the nose exist where the ears are ? In reply, it may be said that the objection is no doubt relevant, but the case of God is different from this. His is a transcendent power, and everything is possible in His case. Imagine a heap of gold in which rings, bracelets, necklaces and other ornaments are everywhere present, and all those things can be obtained from whatever point one likes. Even so, God alone is such in whom all things are everywhere present, and everything can proceed from Him, who can hear all at once words uttered at all places by everyone and who can see everyone, all at once.

In the state of dream, though there are no eyes, ears, nose etc., the mind itself does every act, and itself sees and hears. It itself acts as the seer, seeing an object of sight. Even so, the power of God is most extraordinary. It is capable in every way of doing everything at every place. This constitutes His Divinity and Universality.

This universe constitutes the Body of God in His Manifest aspect. Just as ice is the solid form of water, but not essentially different from it, is the universe also on all fours with this ? Is the physical body also God ?

The reply to this may be given by saying both 'yes' and 'no'. If anyone serves this body and gives comfort to it, I regard it as my service and my comfort, but as a matter of fact I am not the body; I am the soul. But so long as I call this body; three and a half cubits high, as "I", I am the body. Under the circumstance, the



Scanned with CamScanner

whole of animate and inanimate creation is God. all should render it service. its service is the service of God and to make the world happy is bringing happiness to God. And when I am not the physical body. the universe, as the body, also is not God. So long as this body is mine, that body is God's. So long as we are His parts, He is the whole. But, really in the end, it is proved that we are the soul, and not the body. But till it is not so, we should proceed precisely as above. When true Knowledge is gained, one, taintless Brahma alone will remain.

From this point of view, the Unmanifest and Manifest aspect of God are one and the same. The world is a superimposition on God. The Mahatmas say that it is like the conception of a snake in the rope; in reality it does not exist. The world in the dream state appear within us; the water in the mirage is only as appearance. Even so the world is an appearance in God. The Mahatmas alone know the truth about it. After awakening, it is the awakened soul which truly realizes the falsity of the dream-world. So long as this is not realized, means should be adopted. The means is this—

Through meditation of either the Unmanifest or Manifest form, whatever one and only one supreme object is realized, surrendering oneself to that God, from every point of view, service should be rendered to Him through the senses and the body. Remembrance of Him through the mind, utterance of His Name through the breath, hearing of His glory through the ears, making the body act according to His dictates—these are His service; the practice of this is true Devotion; and through this alone the soul's redemption may be quickly gained.

( Translated from the 'Kalyan' )



आचार्य धर्मचार आर्य

Scanned with CamScanner